**Appendix 33**

***Jason, the Argonauts, and the Golden Fleece***

**The Early Years**

Jason was the son of the lawful king of Iolcus, but his uncle Pelias had usurped the throne. Pelias lived in constant fear of losing what he had taken so unjustly. He kept Jason's father a prisoner and would certainly have murdered Jason at birth. But Jason's mother deceived Pelias by mourning as if Jason had died. Meanwhile the infant was bundled off to the wilderness cave of Chiron the Centaur. Chiron tutored Jason in the lore of plants, the hunt and the civilized arts. When he had come of age, Jason set out like a proper hero to claim his rightful throne.

**The First Test**

Unknowingly, Jason was to play his part in a plan hatched on lofty Mount Olympus. Hera, wife of almighty Zeus himself, nursed a rage against King Pelias. For Jason's uncle, the usurper king, had honored all the gods but Hera. Rashly had he begrudged the Queen of Heaven her due. Hera's plan was fraught with danger; it would require a true hero. To test Jason's mettle, she contrived it that he came to a raging torrent on his way to Iolcus. And on the bank was a withered old woman. Would Jason go about his business impatiently, or would he give way to her request to be ferried across the stream?

**The Oracle's Warning**

Jason did not think twice. Taking the crone on his back, he set off into the current. And halfway across he began to stagger under her unexpected weight. For the old woman was none other than Hera in disguise. Some say that she revealed herself to Jason on the far shore; others claim that he never learned of the divine service he'd performed. Jason had lost a sandal in the swift-moving stream, and this would prove significant. For an oracle had warned King Pelias, "Beware a stranger who wears but a single sandal." When Jason arrived in Iolcus, he asserted his claim to the throne. But his uncle Pelias had no intention of giving it up, particularly to a one-shoed stranger.

**The Challenge**

Under the guise of hospitality, he invited Jason to a banquet. And during the course of the meal, he engaged him in conversation. "You say you've got what it takes to rule a kingdom," said Pelias. "May I take it that you're fit to deal with any thorny problems that arise? For example, how would you go about getting rid of someone who was giving you difficulties?" Jason considered for a moment, eager to show a kingly knack for problem solving. "Send him after the Golden Fleece?" he suggested. "Not a bad idea," responded Pelias. "It's just the sort of quest that any hero worth his salt would leap at. Why, if he succeeded he'd be remembered down through the ages. Tell you what, why don't you go?"

**The Argonauts**

And so it came to pass that word went out the length and breadth of Greece that Jason was looking for shipmates to embark upon a perilous but glamorous adventure. And in spite of the miniscule chances of anyone surviving to lay eyes upon the Fleece let alone get past the guarding dragon and return with the prize, large numbers of heroes were ready to run the risk. These were known as the Argonauts, after their ship, the Argo. Among them were Hercules (or Heracles, to give him his proper Greek name) and the heroine Atalanta. Jason had the vessel constructed by the worthy shipwright Argus, who in a fit of vanity named her more or less after himself.

**The Adventure Begins**

Argus had divine sponsorship in his task, Hera having enlisted the aid of her fellow goddess Athena. This patroness of crafts secured a prow for the vessel from timber hewn at the sacred grove of Zeus at Dodona. This prow had the magical property of speaking - and prophesying - in a human voice. And so one bright autumn morning the Argo set out to sea, her benches crewed by lusty ranks of heroic rowers. And true to Pelias's fondest aspirations, it wasn't long before big troubles assailed the company. After stopping for better than a fortnight on an island populated exclusively by women, they put in at Salmydessus.

**The Harpies**

The king welcomed them but was in no mood for festive entertainment. Because he'd offended the gods, he'd been set upon by woman-headed, bird-bodied, razor-clawed scourges known as Harpies. These Harpies were possessed of reprehensible table manners. Every evening at dinnertime, they dropped by to defecate upon the king's repast and hung around making such a racket that he wouldn't have been able to eat had he the stomach for it. As a result, King Phineus grew thinner by the hour. Fortunately two of Jason's crew were direct descendants of the North Wind, which gave them the power to fly. And they kindly chased the Harpies so far away that the king was never bothered again.

**The Clashing Rocks**

In thanks, Phineus informed the Argonauts of a danger just ahead on the route to the Golden Fleece - two rocks called the Symplegades, which crashed together upon any ship passing between them. The king even suggested a mechanism by which one might avoid the effects of these Clashing Rocks. If a bird could be induced to pass between the crags first, causing them to clash together, the Argo could follow quickly behind, passing through safely before they were ready to snap shut again. By means of this device, Jason caused the rocks to spring together prematurely, nipping only the tail feathers of the bird. The Argo was able to pass between them relatively unscathed. Only her very stern was splintered.

**The Flying Ram**

Once arrived in Colchis, Jason had to face a series of challenges meted out by King Aeetes, ruler of this barbarian kingdom on the far edge of the heroic world. He and his people were not kindly disposed toward strangers, although on an earlier occasion he had extended hospitality to a visitor from Jason's home town. This may have been due to the newcomer's unorthodox mode of transportation. For he arrived on the back of a golden-fleeced flying ram. The stranger's name was Phrixus, and he had been on the point of being sacrificed when the ram carried him off. Having arrived safely in Colchis, he sacrificed the ram to the gods and hung its fleece in a grove. Aeetes gave him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage.

**Medea**

King Aeetes had taken a disliking to Jason on sight. He had no particular fondness for handsome young strangers who came traipsing into his kingdom on glorious quests featuring the trampling of his sacred grove and the carrying off of his personal property. For King Aeetes considered the Golden Fleece to be his own, and he was in the midst of telling Jason just what he could do with his precious quest when he was reminded of the obligations of hospitality by another of his daughters named Medea. Medea was motivated by more than good manners. For Hera had been looking out for Jason's interests, and she had succeeded in persuading her fellow goddess Aphrodite to intervene on Jason's behalf.

**A Farmyard Chore**

It was no problem at all for the Goddess of Love to arrange that Medea be stricken with passion for Jason the moment she first saw him. And it was a good thing for Jason that this was so. For not only was he spared a kingly tongue-lashing and a quick trip to the frontier, but Medea quietly offered to help him in his latest predicament. For once her father had calmed down, he had waxed suspiciously reasonable. Of course Jason could have the Fleece and anything else he required in furtherance of his quest - Aeetes couldn't imagine what had possessed him to be so uncooperative. All he required of Jason as a simple token of good faith was the merest of farmyard chores.

**The Fire-Breathing Bulls**

There were two bulls standing in the adjacent pasture. If Jason would be so kind as to harness them, plow the field, sow it and reap the harvest in a single day, King Aeetes would be much obliged - and only too happy to turn over the Golden Fleece. Oh, and there was one trifling detail of which Jason should be aware. These bulls were a bit unusual in that their feet were made of brass sharp enough to rip open a man from gullet to gizzard. And then of course there was the matter of their bad breath. In point of fact, they breathed flames. Along about this juncture Jason thought he heard his mommy, Queen Polymede, calling. But then, as noted, Medea took him gently aside and suggested that she might be of aid.

**Plowing and Sowing**

Quite conveniently for Jason, Medea was a famous sorceress, magic potions being her stock in trade. She slipped Jason a salve which, when smeared on his body, made him proof against fire and brazen hooves. And so it was that Jason boldly approached the bulls and brooked no bullish insolence. Disregarding the flames that played merrily about his shoulders and steering clear of the hooves, he forced the creatures into harness and set about plowing the field. Nor was the subsequent sowing any great chore for the now-heartened hero. Gaily strewing seed about like a nymph flinging flowers in springtime, he did not stop to note the unusual nature of the seed.

**The Dragon's Teeth**

Aeetes, it turns out, had got his hands on some dragon's teeth with unique agricultural properties. As soon as these hit the soil they began to sprout, which was good from the point of view of Jason accomplishing his task by nightfall, but bad in terms of the harvest. For each seed germinated into a fully-armed warrior, who popped up from the ground and joined the throng now menacing poor Jason. Aeetes, meanwhile, was standing off to the side of the field chuckling quietly to himself. It irked the king somewhat to see his daughter slink across the furrows to Jason's side, but he didn't think too much of it at the time. Having proven herself polite to a fault, maybe Medea was just saying a brief and proper farewell.

**Conquest of the Seed Men**

In actuality, she was once more engaged in saving the young hero's posterior. This time there was no traffic in magic embrocations. Medea merely gave Jason a tip in basic psychology. Jason, who it was quite clear by now lacked the heroic wherewithal to make the grade on his own, at least had the sense to recognize good advice. Employing the simple device suggested by Medea, he brought the harvest in on deadline with a minimum of personal effort. He simply threw a stone at one of the men. The man, in turn, thought his neighbor had done it. And in short order all the seed men had turned on one another with their swords until not one was left standing.

**The Golden Fleece**

Aeetes had no choice but to make as though he'd give the Fleece to Jason, but he still had no intention of doing so. He now committed the tactical error of divulging this fact to his daughter. And Medea, still entranced by the Goddess of Love, confided in turn in Jason. Furthermore, she offered to lead him under cover of darkness to the temple grove where the Fleece was displayed, nailed to a tree and guarded by a dragon. And so at midnight they crept into the sacred precinct of Ares, god of war. Jason, ever the hothead, whipped out his sword, but Medea wisely restrained his impetuosity.

**The Aftermath**

Instead, she used a sleeping potion to subvert the monster's vigilance. Together they made off with the Fleece and escaped to the Argo. Setting sail at once, they eluded pursuit. Thus Jason succeeded in his heroic challenge. And once returned to Greece, he abandoned Medea for another princess. For though Jason had sworn to love and honor Medea for the service she had done him, he proved as fickle in this regard as he'd been unfit for single-handed questing.

**Adapted from: http://www.mythweb.com/heroes/jason/**

**Appendix 34**

**Film Review: Disney’s *Hercules***

During our study of Greek mythological heroes, we will be viewing Disney’s *Hercules* (1997).

Your task is to write a **2-page review** of this film. In your review, you must **evaluate the film’s portrayal of heroism**. Does it adhere to the ancient Greek ideals of physical strength and prowess? Or, is there evidence of heroism in accordance with other, more contemporary ideals?

Things to consider when watching…

 Is Hercules the only character in the film who can be considered heroic?

 What heroic acts take place within the film?

 Can genuine heroism be taught and learned?

 Does heroism exist apart from motivation for personal gain?

During the viewing, use the chart below to record and organize potential evidence for your film review. Who/what was heroic? Who/what was not?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER** | **HEROIC DEEDS** | **NON-HEROIC DEEDS** |
| HERCULES |  |  |
| PEGASUS |  |  |
| PHILOCTETES |  |  |
| MEGARA |  |  |

**Your film review will be evaluated using the following rating scale of assessment:**

Preparation chart is complete and attached to film 1 2 3 4 5

review

Film review includes references to specific evidence 1 2 3 4 5

from and throughout the film

Film review addresses both ancient Greek and 1 2 3 4 5

contemporary notions of heroism

Film review demonstrates critical thinking and 1 2 3 4 5

connection to personal ideals

Film review meets length requirement of 2 pages 1 2 3 4 5

Film review is edited for proper spelling and grammar 1 2 3 4 5

/30

**Appendix 35**

**The Myths of Atalanta**

**1.**

ONE of the heroes of the Argonautic expedition was Meleager, son of Oeneus and Althea, king and queen of Calydon. Althea, when her son was born, beheld the three destinies, who as they spun their fatal thread, foretold that the life of the child should last no longer than a brand then burning upon the hearth. Althea seized and quenched the brand, and carefully preserved it for years, while Meleager grew to boyhood, youth and manhood. It chanced, then, that Oeneus, as he offered sacrifices to the gods, omitted to pay due honours to Diana; and she, indignant at the neglect, sent a wild boar of enormous size to lay waste the fields of Calydon. Its eyes shone with blood and fire, its bristles stood like threatening spears, its tusks were like those of Indian elephants. The growing corn was trampled, the vines and olive trees laid waste, the flocks and herds were driven in wild confusion by the slaughtering foe. All common aid seemed vain; but Meleager called on the heroes of Greece to join in a bold hunt for the ravenous monster. Theseus and his friend Pirithous, Jason, Peleus, afterwards the father of Achilles, Telamon the father of Ajax, Nestor, then a youth, but who in his age bore arms with Achilles and Ajax in the Trojan war- these and many more joined in the enterprise. With them came Atalanta, the daughter of Iasius, king of Arcadia. A buckle of polished gold confined her vest, an ivory quiver hung on her left shoulder, and her left hand bore the bow. Her face blent feminine beauty with the best graces of martial youth. Meleager saw and loved.

But now already they were near the monster's lair. They stretched strong nets from tree to tree; they uncoupled their dogs, they tried to find the footprints of their quarry in the grass. From the wood was a descent to marshy grounds. Here the boar, as he lay among the reeds, heard the shouts of his pursuers, and rushed forth against them. One and another is thrown down and slain. Jason throws his spear, with a prayer to Diana for success; and the favouring goddess allows the weapon to touch, but not to wound, removing the steel point of the spear in its flight. Nestor, assailed, seeks and finds safety in the branches of a tree. Telamon rushes on, but stumbling at a projecting root, falls prone. But an arrow from Atalanta at length for the first time tastes the monster's blood. It is a slight wound, but Meleager sees and joyfully proclaims it. Anceus, excited to envy by the praise given to a female, loudly Proclaims his own valour, and defies alike the boar and the goddess who had sent it; but as he rushes on, the infuriated beast lays him low with a mortal wound. Theseus throws his lance, but it is turned aside by a projecting bough. The dart of Jason misses its object, and kills instead one of their own dogs. But Meleager, after one unsuccessful stroke, drives his spear into the monster's side, then rushes on and despatches him with repeated blows.

Then rose a shout from those around; they congratulated the conqueror, crowding to touch his hand. He, placing his foot upon the head of the slain boar, turned to Atalanta and bestowed on her the head and the rough hide which were the trophies of his success. But at this, envy excited the rest to strife. Plexippus and Toxeus, the brothers of Meleager's mother, beyond the rest opposed the gift, and snatched from the maiden the trophy she had received. Meleager, kindling with rage at the wrong done to himself, and still more at the insult offered to her whom he loved, forgot the claims of kindred, and plunged his sword into the offenders' hearts.

**2.**

The innocent cause of so much sorrow was a maiden whose face you might truly say was boyish for a girl, yet too girlish for a boy. Her fortune had been told, and it was to this effect: "Atalanta, do not marry; marriage will be your ruin." Terrified by this oracle, she fled the society of men, and devoted herself to the sports of the chase. To all suitors (for she had many) she imposed a condition which was generally effectual in relieving her of their persecutions- "I will be the prize of him who shall conquer me in the race; but death must be the penalty of all who try and fail." In spite of this hard condition some would try. Hippomenes was to be judge of the race. "Can it be possible that any will be so rash as to risk so much for a wife?" said he. But when he saw her lay aside her robe for the race, he changed his mind, and said, "Pardon me, youths, I knew not the prize you were competing for." As he surveyed them he wished them all to be beaten, and swelled with envy of any one that seemed at all likely to win. While such were his thoughts, the virgin darted forward. As she ran she looked more beautiful than ever. The breezes seemed to give wings to her feet; her hair flew over her shoulders, and the gay fringe of her garment fluttered behind her. A ruddy hue tinged the whiteness of her skin, such as a crimson curtain casts on a marble wall. All her competitors were distanced, and were put to death without mercy. Hippomenes, not daunted by this result, fixing his eyes on the virgin, said, "Why boast of beating those laggards? I offer myself for the contest." Atalanta looked at him with a pitying countenance, and hardly knew whether she would rather conquer him or not. "What god can tempt one so young and handsome to throw himself away? I pity him, not for his beauty (yet he is beautiful), but for his youth. I wish he would give up the race, or if he will be so mad, I hope he may outrun me." While she hesitates, revolving these thoughts, the spectators grow impatient for the race, and her father prompts her to prepare. Then Hippomenes addressed a prayer to Venus: "Help me, Venus, for you have led me on." Venus heard and was propitious.

In the garden of her temple, in her own island of Cyprus, is a tree with yellow leaves and yellow branches and golden fruit. Hence she gathered three golden apples, and unseen by any one else, gave them to Hippomenes, and told him how to use them. The signal is given; each starts from the goal and skims over the sand. So light their tread, you would almost have thought they might run over the river surface or over the waving grain without sinking. The cries of the spectators cheered Hippomenes,- "Now, now, do your best! haste, haste! you gain on her! relax not! one more effort!" It was doubtful whether the youth or the maiden heard these cries with the greater pleasure. But his breath began to fail him, his throat was dry, the goal yet far off. At that moment be threw down one of the golden apples. The virgin was all amazement. She stopped to pick it up. Hippomenes shot ahead. Shouts burst forth from all sides. She redoubled her efforts, and soon overtook him. Again he threw an apple. She stopped again, but again came up with him. The goal was near; one chance only remained. "Now, goddess," said he, "prosper your gift!" and threw the last apple off at one side. She looked at it, and hesitated; Venus impelled her to turn aside for it. She did so, and was vanquished. The youth carried off his prize.

But the lovers were so full of their own happiness that they forgot to pay due honour to Venus; and the goddess was provoked at their ingratitude. She caused them to give offence to Cybele. That powerful goddess was not to be insulted with impunity. She took from them their human form and turned them into animals of characters resembling their own: of the huntress-heroine, triumphing in the blood of her lovers, she made a lioness, and of her lord and master a lion, and yoked them to her car, where they are still to be seen in all representations, in statuary or painting, of the goddess Cybele.

**Adapted from: http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/bulf/bulf17.htm**

**Appendix 36**

**EXIT PASS**

**What have you learned in reading and discussing *The Myths of Atalanta*?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Appendix 37**

***Dear Teacher…***

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